

Model Law: An Act Providing for a Student's Choice to Use Alternatives to Dissection

Sec. 1. Purpose

In order to respect each student's ethical and/or religious position regarding the humane treatment of animals, increase learning levels, and lower educational costs, this act requires State/County School Boards to develop a written policy to give students in the state the ability to choose an alternative to dissecting animals in the classroom.

Sec. 2. Definitions

For the purposes of this act, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (a) "Animal" means any living organism, including, but not limited to, frogs, cats, fetal pigs, and earthworms, including an animal's cadaver or severed parts thereof.
- (b) "Alternative education project" includes, but is not limited to, the use of video recordings, three-dimensional models, films, books, interactive simulation software and computers and assessments of knowledge that would provide an alternate avenue for obtaining the knowledge, information, or experience required by the course of study in question. "Alternative education project" also includes "alternative test."
- (c) "Course of study" means required or elective coursework offered by a public or nonpublic school to students in kindergarten through grade 12.
- (d) "Dissection" means the viewing of the, or act of, dismembering or otherwise destructive use of an invertebrate or vertebrate animal, in part or in whole, preserved or freshly killed, in the study of biological sciences. Animal dissection does not include fixed histological samples of any species, including, but not limited to, plain or stained microscope slides, owl pellets, human autopsy viewing, and plastinated human organs.
- (e) "School" means a public or nonpublic facility for students in kindergarten through grade 12.
- (f) "Student" means a public or nonpublic school pupil enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12.
- (g) "Student choice policy" means a formal written policy provided to teachers, parents and students allowing students to use an alternative to dissection without any penalty for all classes in grades K-12.

Sec. 3. Student use of alternatives to animal dissection

Each County School Board shall develop a written student choice policy to permit students to be allowed to use non-animal alternatives in the classroom instead of dissecting animals or animal specimens. The policy shall include the following provisions:

- (a) A student may decline to participate in or observe, wholly or in part, any of the following as part of a course of study: dissection, vivisection, incubation, infliction of harm, capture, or destruction of an animal.
- (b) A student who exercises his or her right of refusal under this section must be given a suitable alternative education project designed to provide the student with the factual knowledge, information, or experience required by the course of study.
- (c) A student may not be penalized or discriminated against with regard to grade, removal from class, or otherwise, for refusing to participate in or observe any activities outlined in §3 (a). Any alternative education project assigned must require no more time and effort than the actual dissection activity and a comparable grading method must be used to assess the alternative project.
- (d) Each school shall notify parents and students, in writing, of the existence of this policy, incorporating it in the description of all classes that plan to use dissection as a teaching tool. Each teacher shall also notify students in a biology or life science classroom of the policy:
 - (i) at the beginning of each semester or quarter that a student choice policy allows them to use an alternative to dissection; and
 - (ii) not less than three weeks prior to any scheduled course exercise involving animals that all students have the right to refuse to take part in those activities outlined in the policy.
- (e) A student must be given the opportunity to decline participation or observation of the animal-related activity on the day the activity is scheduled.
- (f) Each school shall adopt the County School Board policy and notify science teachers, parents and students of the existence of the policy to ensure that students' beliefs are respected.
- (g) No animals used for dissection should be on the list of threatened or endangered species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.
- (h) This Act would provide for severability of invalid provisions, if any.